

REPORT

SCHOOL-BASED POLICE PROGRAM

REVIEW

MAY 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School-Based Police Program (SBP Program) was launched by the Minister for Education, the Hon Selena Uibo MLA and the Minister for Police, the Hon Nicole Manison MLA, on 17 September 2018.

The school-based police program was designed in collaboration with the Department of Education (DoE) and the Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO), the program was launched in ten government schools at the start of Term 4, 2018.

The new model aims to address issues raised during the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory with a greater focus on safety, youth engagement and youth diversion.

Through an intelligence-led, evidence-based approach, ten central locations were selected as hubs for the program:

- Sanderson Middle School
- Dripstone Middle School
- Darwin Middle School
- Nightcliff Middle School
- Palmerston College
- Taminmin College
- Casuarina Senior College
- Katherine High School
- Tennant Creek High School
- Centralian Middle School.

At the time of announcement, a commitment was made to report on the progress and effectiveness of the SBP Program in Term 1, 2019. To inform the report, a review of the SBP Program has been undertaken by the Department of Education, in consultation with stakeholders. Including school staff, SBP officers, students, COGSO, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), the NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) and the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT).

In its first six months of operation, the SBP Program has been well received by schools, with principals acknowledging the importance of “proactive policing” and students stating that it, “is very important to have police here at school ...we see them walking around.” Officers wearing firearms, although a concern for some stakeholders, was not identified as an issue during consultation with school staff and students.

Throughout the review, stakeholders provided feedback to ensure that the model is sustainable in the long term. Suggestions included:

- ensuring clarity about the purpose of the SBP Program
- consistent messaging about the SBP Program at all levels
- ensuring SBP officers had role clarity
- supporting SBP officers with the provision of professional development including in the delivery of relevant lessons to students.

The following recommendations have been developed as a result of the review to enhance SBP Program clarity, consistency and effectiveness.

1. Develop a service delivery framework for the Police in Schools Program that clearly defines the program aim, target student cohort, roles and responsibilities, line management accountability, key performance indicators and program evaluation requirements (DoE and NT Police to develop jointly).
2. Update the operational guidelines for the Police in Schools Program to provide a clear and accessible document that articulates the service delivery framework for schools and SBP officers (DoE as lead agency with NT Police input).
3. Review, update and rebadge the Drug and Personal Awareness Safety Program (developed by DoE and NT Police in 2008-09) as the *Police in Schools Resource Kit*.
4. Provide program-specific professional development to SBP officers to enhance consistent and key messaging in the school context (DoE and NT Police to action).

The Department of Education will work with NT Police to implement all recommendations by the end of 2019.

INTRODUCTION

The review of the new School-Based Police Program has been undertaken in accordance with the announcement of the SBP Program by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Hon Nicole Manison MLA, and the Minister for Education, the Hon Selena Uiibo MLA on 17 September 2018. A commitment was made at the same time to review the progress and effectiveness of the new program, with a report to be completed by the end of Term 1, 2019.

This report commences with background information about the new SBP Program and how it has evolved, before highlighting some features of the original NT School-Based Community Police Program as a contextual framework for the reader. The methodological approach taken will be discussed briefly before proceeding to an analysis of the data and synthesis of the findings in accordance with recurring themes, prior to the conclusion and presenting recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The COGSO media release of 15 March 2018 called for the re-instatement of SBP officers. This release followed motions put to the 2017 COGSO Annual General Meeting by school councils asking for the return of SBP officers. The request was also prompted by the increasing youth crime rate affecting businesses and homes in urban centres of the NT along with an increase in violence, physical, verbal and cyber bullying threats/ assaults being made by students at a school level. COGSO was fielding concerns raised by school principals and parents on a daily basis and observed comments indicating, “schools felt they had lost an incredible part of the school resourcing” due to withdrawal of SBP two years earlier.

A considerable amount of research was undertaken by COGSO between March and October 2018 in (a) identifying SBP-type programs nationally/internationally; (b) reviewing current resourcing for youth diversion in the NT; and (c) developing a plausible SBP program for the NT, for example, COGSO, Your Voice for NT Public Education (no date) and *Proposed Model: School-Based Constables*.

Police in schools had also been highlighted in the media with *Schools calling for cop program*, printed in the *NT News* of 17 March 2018; and *Back to school for cops*, 28 May 2018; as well as discussion in the NT Legislative Assembly on 11 May 2018.

COGSO continued to lobby government ministers and chief executive officers of DoE and NT Police to prioritise the need for SBP until the Chief Minister agreed to support the concept and requested departmental heads meet to develop a solution. COGSO met with NT Police on a number of occasions over ensuing months from March 2018, and on 7 August 2018, NT Police and DoE staff met to discuss the proposed return of SBP officers.

A Proposed 'New' School-Based Policing Framework

Partnering for Prevention: A Framework for: School-Based Policing was developed by COGSO and NT Police in consultation with DoE.

In its introduction, the framework paper acknowledges the forerunner NT School-Based Constable (SBC) Program established in the mid-1980s which was based on a "proactive policing in schools" approach. The program proved successful and was replicated throughout Australia and adopted by schools in New Zealand.

In recognition of the previous model, the COGSO authors state that, "a new school-based policing model must lift the best parts of the previous SBC program and add new thinking to not only return a preventative school-based policing program but increase safety and reduce victimisation and crime." As a result, "long term benefits may result in reducing the escalating numbers of students requiring re-engagement strategies and youth diversion programs."

The framework paper goes on to add, "a preventative policing approach with quality selection and training of officers and collaboration with schools, will strengthen school safety, respectful relationships and student success."

These comments are reiterated in the report, *The Police and the Community in the 1990s – School-Based Community Policing, Northern Territory* (Kevin G. Maley, NT Police (no date sighted)), wherein Mr Maley acknowledges the importance of writing a "position profile" for SBP officers. Maley states, "the selection of personnel to take up these positions is extremely important. In fact, if the right person is not available, the position is just not filled by anyone." He adds, "it is better to go without rather than appoint an unsuitable person." When school-based policing commenced in the NT, Maley noted, "an arrangement exists between the school and police...allowing for a six-month trial period. If the school does not suit the police officer or the police officer does not suit the school, then the appointment is not confirmed and another applicant is recruited."

According to Maley, "all school-based community police officers were trained in classroom techniques, methods of instruction and comprehensively examined in relevant legislation affecting children such as the *Juvenile Justice Act (1984)*, the Criminal Code and the *Community Welfare Act (1984)*. They were also trained in Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)." A school-based community policing manual was also developed in conjunction with DARE to assist the constables with their school community roles. Maley said that "each school-based community police officer" was able to "carry out his/her job in a most professional manner" as he/she was equipped to do so. Maley also acknowledged, "the need for a consistent level of information to be imparted to any person who asked questions of the constables" no matter where they were located across the NT.

All constables at this time were under the direct guidance of a sergeant co-ordinator of the school-based community program whose duties were clearly articulated in a duty statement.

While resourcing is out of scope for this review, it is worth noting that human resources committed to the previous NT school-based community policing programs were not sourced from police operational areas but sourced through "very solid and properly constructed Cabinet submissions...to elicit government assistance for funding," Maley refers.

New School-Based Police Program – Police Concept of Operations

The new SBP Program was designed in collaboration with DoE, COGSO and NT Police and is based on preventative policing and the delivery of vital safety education. The SBP Program is focussed on the engagement and support for students and families, particularly those transitioning into the middle school or at risk of contact with the youth justice system.

The *School-Based Policing and Youth and Community Engagement Constables – Concept of Operations* document appended to DoE ministerial briefing of 17 August 2018 (MIN2018/860), states, “The Northern Territory Police Force will implement a school-based policing model to run concurrently with the Youth and Community Engagement model.”

The mission statement referred to in the Concept of Operations document is “to provide an enhanced Northern Territory Police youth engagement focus, in particular with schools in the greater Darwin area, to reduce crime through community engagement activities...multi-agency partnerships and relationships.” The document states that, “the purpose of this concept of operations is to provide an improved model for school-based policing, in particular for vulnerable youth at schools, while maintaining the capability of providing a service for youth and community engagement.”

The model provides two integrated programs focussing on youth which now come under the command of the Superintendent in the newly established Youth Engagement Division.

The SBP Program commenced in ten base schools on 15 October 2018. Schools in the greater Darwin region include:

- Casuarina Senior College
- Darwin Middle School (Bullocky Point Precinct)
- Dripstone Middle School
- Nightcliff Middle School
- Palmerston College
- Sanderson Middle School
- Taminmin College.

An additional three constables have been resourced from regional local commands and report through their divisional Superintendent to provide school-based policing functions to:

- Centralian Middle School
- Katherine High School
- Tennant Creek High School.

All positions for school-based policing roles have been filled from within current Northern Territory Police Force (NTPF) capabilities.

It is noted in *The School-Based Policing and Youth and Community Engagement Constables – Concept of Operations* document that, “the officers will pivot from their respective schools throughout the school year. The SBP members will have a specific focus on engaging with identified vulnerable children and families. The greater majority of these youth will be in Year 7 transitioning into the high school system. Members will engage and assist in providing a joint agency safety net to facilitate a smooth transition into the high school environment.”

The Concept of Operations document goes on to add, “the SBP model will incorporate coverage of the feeder primary schools to each nominated high school, with a particular effort to be made towards engaging with Year 6 focus children and families identified at those feeder schools.”

Of significance in this approach is the attention or emphasis on 'focus' children and the means of selection for their additional support including: school absence; suspension; behaviour incident reports; and education adjustment plans. The document states that DoE will work collaboratively with the Territory Intelligence Co-ordination Centre to assist in identifying children most at risk to be brought to the attention of SBP, after-hours Youth and Community Engagement Constables, DoE and school principals participating in the SBP Program.

The *School-Based Policing ... Concept of Operations* document highlights 17 SBP responsibilities including delivery of educational policing presentations both within and outside of schools and designates the following key performance measures:

- number of contacts with identified focus students
- number of contacts with parents/carers of identified focus students
- reduced incidents of reported violence
- improved attendance of focus students.

In addition, the Concept of Operations document notes that each member of SBP will be provided with appropriate office space (allowing discreet youth access), a laptop and general access to an NT Police vehicle during shift.

Reference to police uniform is also made within the Concept of Operations document stating, "in line with current NTPF policy, all SBP members will wear full uniform and all accoutrements including firearms during shift. Members will maintain a level of flexibility in the manner of which they wear their accoutrements including whether they choose to wear body worn vests or not."

Management, governance, accountability, training and service delivery for SBP is the responsibility of NT Police according to the Concept of Operations documentation. In terms of reporting, the document states that, "the supervising sergeant will submit weekly reports to their respective commands detailing all engagement activities, including with respective principals, measuring interactions and providing a platform for feedback. An annual end of year report will be submitted in December of each year and will include a summation of each site, including the outcomes and improvements identified because of the SBP Program."

The Concept of Operations document also states that SBP will be primarily based at their respective secondary schools. There is no mention of working with Catholic and independent schools.

Department of Education School-Based Police Interim Guidelines

Interim guidelines were developed by DoE in October 2018, with a commitment to review and update in 2019 after initial implementation of the SBP Program. It would be worthwhile undertaking this update in accordance with the review findings.

The guidelines provide a policy statement about the SBP Program; a list of definitions; an explanation of the SBP Program; a list of SBP officer responsibilities; an outline of principals' responsibilities; explanation of the roles of DoE and NT Police; an indication of focus areas for the SBP Program; expectations about law enforcement responsibilities; information about legislation and policy related documents; and processes regarding complaints.

Review Methodology

A project plan was developed in the first instance to outline and systematically guide the SBP Program review process.

The main methodological approach taken for this review has been interview and discussion, either face to face or via telephone for regional stakeholders in the main, to gain qualitative information, using a semi-structured format.

This approach was considered most suitable due to the relatively small sample size of principals/assistant principals in ten base (middle) schools, plus a selection of principals and assistant principals in selected feeder primary/senior schools, student groups and a range of organisations.

Although the method was time consuming, it was also used to discuss sensitivities associated with the review in an open, honest and frank conversation style, with each school consulted separately to ascertain progress, effectiveness, challenges, highlights and suggestions for improvement of the Police in Schools Program.

A Likert rating scale was used for two interview questions – one relating to progress associated with the implementation of the Police in Schools Program, and another relating to consideration of safety at the school. The use of psychometric scales provides an opportunity to gauge satisfaction/adequacy and motivation across the NT's diverse school settings through over-arching categories using a numeric scale.

Interview and discussion was also considered to be the most appropriate method of gaining insights into similarities and differences across the diverse spectrum of schools implementing the program.

The same methodology was used for SBP, and where it was possible, interviews were conducted with individual SBP to gauge their responses in relation to the school principal's feedback to similar questions. However, SBP work in pairs currently due to operational requirements so it was not always possible to interview SBP separately.

The arrival of tropical Cyclone Trevor to the Top End of the Northern Territory during the consultation phase of the review (late March 2019), brought a slight disruption to timing of consultations for SBP as they were discharged to operational duties at this time. This has slightly affected the proposed timeline of events, particularly in terms of writing the report.

Students also had the opportunity to take part in interviews. Two 'base' schools offered to take part in this process and assisted with student participation. Three student groups were consulted at different times including Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 'focus' students, and Year 11 student leaders in one school and a Year 9 group of students at another school.

A range of stakeholders took part in the consultation interviews including: senior executive staff in NT Police, DoE, Territory Intelligence Co-ordination Centre, APONT, NAAJA, NTCOSS and COGSO. The consultation process for the review commenced with key stakeholders on 19 March 2019 and concluded on 5 April 2019.

Limitations

- Limitations of this review include the condensed timeframe for review components i.e. project plan development, consultations, data analysis and report writing.
- Small sample size creates difficulties to de-identify data.

- Quantitative data review and analysis have not taken place due to small sample size.

Consultation and Findings

As part of the data gathering consultation process, interviews/discussions were held with ten principals in the SBP 'base' schools along with two assistant principals, one senior college principal, five feeder primary school principals and one assistant principal, ten SBP officers, three senior NT Police members, three DoE executives; three DoE Curriculum Team members, one support teacher, two APONT staff members, two NAAJA Executive members, three NTCOSS senior staff members, two COGSO executive staff and student sessions with 12 students. Over 60 participants were consulted in total during the review, inclusive of written notation.

Explanation: The 'base' schools (for the purpose of this review) are referred to in DoE documentation (ministerial brief of 17 August 2018) as the schools selected for the introduction of the SBP program.

It is also noted in the DoE Interim Guidelines of October 2018, under section 3. School-Based Policing Program that reference is made to "School-based Police officers ... located in central 'hub' schools ... working with staff, students and families of the 'hub' school and surrounding schools."

This example demonstrates a lack of terminology consistency across documentation, and although not a major issue, in essence it has the potential to cause misperceptions in the field.

System Perspective

Consistency of messaging is crucial if misunderstandings are to be avoided. One principal states, "Communication is a big issue at a number of points, for example, system/DoE to schools/Police to SBP ... and needs to be addressed to reduce inconsistencies across schools." This is backed up by another principal who added, "we were given information by the department and letters to parents prior to the Police in Schools Program commencing, but what is happening in the school is different to the information provided." The inference here is in relation to the workload and approach being undertaken by the SBP officer whose time in the base school is consequently limited.

Of note also, and in relation to the above comments is that there are three separate documents circulating about school-based policing. One document has been prepared by COGSO titled: *A framework for School-Based Policing* (undated); another has been prepared by Police titled: *School-Based Policing and Youth and Community Engagement Constables*, Darwin Metropolitan Support Division, *Concept of Operations* (undated), and another document developed by DoE is titled: *Police in Schools, Interim Guidelines*, October 2018.

Similar information is included in all three documents, yet they are different and appear to have been written for specific purposes and clientele.

This may go part of the way in explaining disparate forms of practice among SBP in schools – from visiting many schools on an ad hoc basis, to being located and working in the base school primarily.

For consistency of practice, another principal suggests that, "a clear and concise policy framework is required, with well-defined differentiation needed between the school and operational policing role." This principal goes on to suggest that an MOU "be set up between Education and Police." A formal approach such as this, would build a bridge between the two systems, increase the synergies, reduce

incongruent messaging and as suggested by the same principal, “increase the possibilities of information-sharing between the organisations, for example, calendars/student information/updates.”

Highlights of the New School-Based Police Program

Before synthesising the consultation feedback, it is important to highlight that school principals expressed excitement, and relief to have SBP back in NT schools. One principal stated that she was “ecstatic” upon hearing that the SBP program was being re-instated into schools, and another principal commented that, “the SBP program has the potential to be highly effective and develop whole school-community connection.”

A principal in a feeder primary school commented, “proactive policing is very important – particularly for primary aged children, and Indigenous children who often see police in a different light when undertaking reactive policing duties ... we now have an Indigenous student wanting to be a police officer since arrival of SBP at the school.”

An SBP officer said, “I am loving my new job back in schools; work is different to previously; issues around social media are huge with an increase in sexting and messaging causing fights.” The officer added, “schools are very excited to have SBP back in schools.”

Another regional principal commented that, “we are very happy with the SBP Program, the SBP officer has great communication across locations, is someone who understands kids, students know (the SBP officer) and the proactive and preventative role is working well.”

Although principals and SBP acknowledge that the SBP program “was put into schools quickly” and the “program was rushed to start with,” as well as there being “limited communication” - a primary school principal in a regional location states, “the SBP Program is sensational, we are extremely happy, and the SBP officer is always there, has positive relationships with students, staff and parents, and when not available, the local station police assist.”

A range of issues have also been raised by SBP officers and principals in the hope they will be addressed to improve the program’s effectiveness and outcomes for all involved.

School-Based Police Program Progress

A four-point Likert rating scale was used for principals to judge the progress of the SBP program in relation to implementation and outcomes for Term 4, 2018 to the present, i.e. end of Term 1, 2019.

Interestingly half of the principals surveyed placed their schools at the first indicator (Level 1) – ‘Commencing’, while the other half placed their schools at level (Level 3) ‘Growing’ and no schools had reached (Level 4) – ‘Advancing’, as SBP are still working through processes and building relationships with students, teachers and families in general.

In terms of correlation and causation, it appears that in schools where the SBP have a “solid presence and visibility, good relationships with staff, students and know families,” and “are the right fit for the position ... implementation has been seamless” according to a number of principals.

In schools where the SBP have “no, or ad hoc visibility,” are “walk-throughs,” and “not present at recess and lunch, before or after school” ... are not “proactive or relational with students or staff,” “do not

make whereabouts known,” the scores at these schools are sitting at a number 1. The congruence between the two variables, for example, SBP presence and a higher or lower score, is remarkable.

Despite the progress scores, principals are keen to forge ahead and try to seek a solution to improve the score card, with many suggesting the need for “job descriptions to be re-written, selection requirements be undertaken, with right fit, for positions” being crucial to SBP Program outcomes.

Department of Education School-Based Police Interim Guidelines – Feedback

The following feedback needs to be taken into account when reviewing the guidelines: one principal felt that the “role is ill-defined,” and most principals commented that “the SBP role needed to be clearly defined and communicated to principals and SBP members.”

Another principal spoke at length about the “need to review the responsibilities of the SBP members, that there are currently so many listed in the Interim Guidelines, SBP can get lost among them, and that it would be worthwhile letting principals and DoE staff know, what SBP can, and cannot do.”

In this vein, another principal commented that “the guidelines are too long and detailed, and need to be reduced and re-written succinctly so that the role of the SBP officer is clear, and is distinct from their responsibilities.”

In terms of improvements, a principal suggested that, “a police in schools framework needs to be developed and underpinned by a policy platform with the role of SBP clearly defined and communicated to principals/schools and SBP, with key performance indicators identified and communicated to key stakeholders.” The same principal added that the “SBP Program needed to be reviewed at six monthly intervals until satisfaction and key milestones for the program are met.”

It appears that much of the concern about responsibility and role clarity relates to the absence or lack of SBP presence at some schools – particularly ‘base’ schools, and some feeder primary schools.

A principal who had “high expectations” about the program, voiced “frustration” ... stating that there needed to be “role clarity and consistency of approach i.e. SBP negotiating times when available to be at the school for lessons/presentations.” This principal echoed comments made by peers who appeared unsure about line management of, and for, the SBP officers and the need to address accountability including SBP signing in and out of schools as a Work Health and Safety requirement and a courtesy.

An MOU between DoE and NT Police could address the line management and accountability issues, as well as co-ordination of resources.

The comment was also made that, “SBP are spread too thin, and that it would assist schools if they knew when the SBP officer was planning to be at the school, so programming of presentations, booking in mediation sessions and working with at risk students could be planned and timetabled where possible.”

An SBP officer said much the same, “SBP are spread too thinly, and are unable to build rapport and develop relationships with students.” Other SBP reiterated that, “we are just scratching the surface,” but “doing the best we can.”

Another SBP officer discussed the number of schools being serviced and felt “stretched and being pulled in a number of ways,” because it was necessary to work in pairs. The SBP officer felt that although “operationally it was worthwhile working in pairs, it was creating a barrier to program integrity” as SBP often needed to “attend to the other SBP officer’s priorities, and it was important to be mindful and respectful of the other SBP constable’s needs.” As such, SBP felt compromised as, “not able to do what is necessary to do, and not here enough (in base school), to build relationships.”

School-Based Police Perspectives

Common themes recurring in discussion with SBP included challenges mentioned previously such as “the number of schools to service” (government base/middle schools, feeder primary schools, senior schools) and therefore “being stretched and spread too thinly.” Access to police vehicles was raised as a potential barrier to the SBP program. However, discussions with police indicate that co-ordination of duties between schools and SBP need to be improved.

Another important area mentioned by SBP, and observed by school principals, is the need for training in general to work in schools (Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was mentioned as a key training requirement for SBP), as well as “specific training to deliver programs, and work with children and youth.” It appears that the main training this cohort of SBP have received, is Cyber Safety *Think u Know* training delivered by the Australian Federal Police, and it is this program which is most frequently delivered by SBP for students and parents.

It was also suggested by SBP that a resource with lessons developed for specific classes and year groups would be extremely useful, along with training in the methodological approach to deliver the content and key messages. Some current SBP were trained in DARE, and found this professionally reassuring, but it appears that none of the current cohort of SBP have undertaken training in the Drug and Personal Awareness Safety Program that was developed by staff in DoE in conjunction with NT Police in 2008-09 (replacing DARE). The Drug and Personal Awareness Safety Program was developed for use by NT Police officers and covers a range of topics under the following headings: Roles of Police in Society; Keeping Ourselves and Others Safe; and Rights, Rules and Responsibilities.

Increased knowledge and understanding in ‘what’ and ‘how’ to present information has the potential to increase SBP confidence to deliver lessons and presentations to students, and increase the professional status and integrity of the SBP Program.

Other forms of training suggested by SBP and principals includes: case management; behaviour management; protective behaviours; and restorative justice. One SBP officer suggested that it would be useful to train with teachers wherever possible. This is being actioned with the Berry Street Education Model training, focusing on trauma-informed practices, being delivered to Police and DoE staff in April and May 2019.

In terms of the role, an SBP officer indicated that there “was no formality around what we do, no systemic approach, and no apparent structure and routine” noting that there had been changes to the division and a lack of continuity in senior management.

A flow chart of management structures for DoE and NT Police with regard to oversight of the SBP Program as part of an MOU would aid communication and ease current concern and confusion on both sides.

Role clarity is a top priority and “identifying what the core function of the Police in Schools Program is” would assist SBP with their focus, “as would having key performance indicators for accountability, and to keep us on track.”

Another SBP officer highlighted the importance of ‘fluidity’ within the program, “in order to be able to focus attention where it is needed, give guidance to schools and use discretion when working with students and families.”

There appears to be concern about the SBP officers’ role in relation to ‘focus’ students with an SBP officer stating that there has been a lack of communication about the process, for example, were letters sent out notifying families about their children being a ‘focus’ student? There is no formal documentation in place to advise the SBP about how to manage a ‘focus’ student, for example, process/plan/formality to follow.” The SBP person goes on to say “we need more structure than there is now with focus students and with schools in general.” Another SBP officer states “there is a lack of direction on both sides, and we are confused.” For example, who takes on the role of contacting parents? One principal stated that their school uses an “informed consent process” when dealing with students.

As communication is a priority for schools, it has been suggested by principals and SBP that documentation be provided to schools regarding the contact officer overseeing the SBP Program.

Inconsistency in messaging has been raised by SBP, for example, there is confusion about their roles in relation to investigations, i.e. “not carrying out investigations,” yet “tending to pick up investigations if school-related.”

Accoutrements on the whole have not been an issue in most schools. If students are inquisitive or ask about them, SBP provide information as part of a ‘teachable moment’. SBP indicate that accoutrements “are an inconvenience when playing sport.”

An SBP officer made the following suggestions to enhance the program: “Aim of Police in Schools Program needs to be clarified and clearly articulated to all stakeholders; the term SBP could be changed to *School Engagement Officers* as a better association with the work we are doing and aligns better with the fact that we are also operational police; a uniform, consistent approach is required across all schools; realistic expectations are needed; the role needs to be clearly defined and articulated ... proactive vs reactionary needs to be articulated to everyone in order to manage expectations and reduce ill information and misconceptions; a reporting mechanism is needed; a flow chart advising work flow channels could improve communication breakdown and increase understanding, for example, how/where/when to make contact and to whom; we need specialised training, for example, ‘how’ to work with ‘focus’ students, and in specific program/lesson content and delivery; data is crucial for accountability and needed to measure effectiveness of the Police in Schools Program; we need measurable key performance indicators that link with our work, for example:

- ✓ number of students/community members with whom SBP have engaged
- ✓ number of lessons/presentations delivered
- ✓ number of re-engaging meetings attended
- ✓ number of diversions.”

Student Voice – Program Effectiveness

In order to gauge effectiveness of the SBP Program, student comments and reflections are listed in their raw form (Appendix A refers). Groups A-D are from one 'base' school and Group E is from another 'base' school. The schools have very different demographics and the students' perspectives are unique and honest – highlighting how effective it is having SBP back in their respective schools.

Student comments are representative of boys, girls and mixed groups in different age and year groups, from two diverse schools that are representative of 'focus' and mainstream students. It is suggestive from student feedback that the SBP Program is proving successful and making a difference in the short space of time it has been back in schools. One of the focus students remarked that "truancy can be a problem when SBP are here – as they (SBP) are out the front" of the school.

The student feedback also echoes COGSO's earlier statement and assertion that, "A preventative policing approach with quality selection and training of officers and collaboration with schools, will strengthen school safety, respectful relationships and student success."

Indirect comments from stakeholders also indicate that parents have remarked how happy they are to have SBP back in schools.

Stakeholder Perspectives

A range of organisations expressed an interest in being consulted as part of the review. Key points raised are as follows.

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency

The Chief Executive Officer and Manager Law and Justice stated that they had no problems and hadn't received any complaints about the Police in Schools Program, remarking that the implementation to date had been 'smooth sailing'. NAAJA was supportive of the SBP Program (having worked with SBP in the previous DARE program) and acknowledge their appreciation for being kept informed through regular meetings with NT Police and COGSO. NAAJA also reiterated the need for clarity of the role of SBP, and the need for specialised training for SBP to enhance the program.

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

APONT NT Network Co-ordinators spoke about their initial concerns regarding SBP "being armed with guns ... and how this sent the 'wrong message'... particularly in relation to the association with United States' system and how things can go horribly wrong with escalation of events."

Discussion also focussed on some of the perceived underlying problems, particularly for Aboriginal children and their families living in the NT, along with suggestions to enhance the SBP program i.e. "needing a culturally appropriate, holistic police program with specialist support (as in a wrap-around model) with a more co-ordinated approach."

Concern was raised about the increasing rates of suicide among Aboriginal children, "as young as 12," and "now at alarming rates" and "the need for multi-purpose social and recreational centres across the NT which provide a safe and supportive learning and developmental environment for Indigenous children and youth."

APONT also asked to be involved in further discussions/communication regarding the SBP program.

Northern Territory Council of Social Services

The Chief Executive Officer of NTCOSS and policy officers (Darwin and Alice Springs) raised concerns particularly relating to “mixed messaging regarding the purpose of the SBP program” for example, is the focus of the program on crime/violence/poor behaviour in school; truancy; or proactive policing i.e. developing relationships with students? The lack of clarity about the Police in Schools Model, and confusion about the role of SBP (comparing with previous program) where police were based in schools and not operational is affecting “expectations of SBP role.” NTCOSS would like to see the Police in Schools Program “clearly articulated; specialised training for SBP; name change to Police Engagement Officer; special attention paid to the links between government/non-government organisations supporting vulnerable children and families” and “to be involved in ongoing communication re SBP program.”

Consultation Recurring Themes

The following recurring themes are indicative of the need to make amendments and improvements to enhance the Police in Schools Program - according to respondents’ feedback:

1. Revised Policy Framework
 - MOU developed between the DoE and NT Police
 - A clear and concise SBP Program aim developed and articulated
 - Key performance indicators established that link directly with the program’s aim
 - DoE policy developed and interim guidelines updated
 - Concept of operations replaced with standard operating procedures for SBP
 - Review undertaken 12-monthly until satisfaction is guaranteed at school and SBP levels
 - Data sources refined and aligned with KPIs
2. Communication
 - Improved at all levels (system – departments to staff and vice-versa)
 - Consistent messaging in all written and oral communication
 - Increased liaison between departments to principals, SBP and vice-versa
 - SBP sign in and out of schools as part of Work Health and Safety requirements
 - Improved linkages with departments/organisations working with vulnerable students
 - Clarification about contacting parents, for example, school role
 - Line management clarified and structure/flow chart made available to schools and police
 - A contact person working with/overseeing SBP Program - identified in DoE and NT Police and made known to principals
3. SBP Role Clarity
 - Role clarified
 - Responsibilities reduced to a manageable level and clearly defined
 - Job description refined to fit with new SBP Program
 - School and operational role clarified and articulated to key stakeholders
 - Accountability checks and balances developed as part of duty statement
4. SBP Model
 - The current SBP Model be redefined to allow greater effect at schools
 - Co-ordination of SBP Program with principals
 - Training developed for SBP regarding program, content delivery and topical issues
 - A resource be provided by DoE for SBP use in schools and community presentations (consistency of messaging and process)

- Review suitability of focus student cohort, i.e. process, plan, procedures developed and articulated to key stakeholders

Conclusion

This review has been comprehensive in terms of the time taken to interview principals, SBP, DoE and NT Police staff, as well as consultation with non-government organisations including the peak parent body – COGSO.

The review has highlighted issues and challenges where changes are proposed, in order to enhance the program's integrity, status, professionalism, accountability and ultimately outcomes for student and school-community safety and wellbeing. The challenges have been highlighted in this report under the heading Recurring Themes, and will assist the agencies responsible for SBP Program implementation to adopt or adapt as considered necessary, to improve functionality, and reduce concern and criticism from stakeholders and the community.

The issue of school-based police officers wearing firearms, although a concern for some stakeholders, was not identified as an issue during consultation with school staff and students.

Although the program has been in schools for just two terms, the outcomes have been noticed by schools and students across the NT as illustrated from interviewed students who stated, "it is very important to have police here at school ... we see them walking around." "SBP have a neutral presence in the school and yes, it has made a difference having SBP here at school ... even if we don't see them often, they are like the *silent security*." "We have had no major fights this year ... violence has decreased considerably since SBP came in." "Having SBP here is a good influence for everyone ... there is a lot less negative behaviour happening in class and less threatening of teachers/students in general."

This report concludes with a list of recommendations, having commenced by illustrating the catalyst and drive behind the re-introduction of the Police in Schools Program, discussing documentation which accompanies the program and highlighting feedback from principals and SBP in the main, who are responsible for the SBP delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a service delivery framework for the School-Based Police Program that clearly defines the program aim, target student cohort, roles and responsibilities, line management accountability, key performance indicators and program evaluation requirements (DoE and NT Police to develop jointly).
2. Update the operational guidelines for the School-Based Police Program to provide a clear and accessible document that articulates the service delivery framework for schools and school-based police officers (DoE as lead agency with NT Police input).
3. Review, update and rebadge Drug and Personal Awareness Safety Program (developed by DoE and NT Police in 2008-09) as the *Police in Schools Resource Kit*.
4. Provide program-specific professional development to school-based police to enhance consistent and key messaging in the school context (DoE and NT Police to action).

Student Voice – Program Effectiveness

In order to gauge effectiveness of the SBP program, student comments and reflections are listed below in their raw form in order to capture students' unique perspectives. Groups A-D are from one 'base' school and Group E is from another 'base' school. The schools have very different demographics.

Group A:

- Part of a handpicked student focus group participating in the boxing program every Thursday for one hour
- About ten boys are in the box-a-cise group
- "We really enjoy the sessions; they are physical, and have really made a difference"
- "Selected because of attendance and anger issues"
- "The SBP talk to us about right and wrong choices/how to manage anger/issues and talk to us about our options. It, "has really made a difference; now think twice before going off"
- SBP are involved in re-entry meetings and "they explain things to us"

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Would like more sessions – twice a week
- Build things like bikes; be involved in maintenance

Group B:

- "Was suspended"
- "Definitely good having SBP"
- "SBP are friendly and students are friendly towards SBP"
- "Less fights"
- "SBP always offering to help people out and suggest strategies to use"
- "It is hard to leave school when SBP are here – as they are out the front"

Group C:

- "We're boys, and can be boys when we are in the boxing/exercise sessions with the SBP"
- "Start our sessions sitting in a circle and the SBP ask us how our week has been"
- "We have grown a connection with each other in this group ... where before we wouldn't talk or get on with each other"
- "Some were selected for the focus group because of anger issues ... can get rid of anger and get fit through boxing"
- "We talk about right and wrong"

Highlights:

- "We can talk to the SBP"
- "They're fun"
- "They're around at recess and lunch"
- "Definitely want the SBP Program to continue"

Suggestions for improvement:

- "More time/sessions with SBP doing activities like boxing"
- "Girls need it too"

- “Need tournaments after we finish training”

GROUP D:

- “Students love having them here”
- “They are always talking to kids”
- “SBP help kids”
- “SBP very approachable”
- “Not intimidating”
- “SBP genuinely happy to be here”
- “With SBP presence, school appears to be safer”
- “SBP speak at assemblies/provide positive messages”
- “Mum was very upset when they took SBP away before”

Suggestions for improvement:

- “Let everyone know where SBP office is at the school”
- “Share SBP with good students too, for example, more involvement in pastoral care program/lessons i.e. safe partying; car/driving safety/AOD for older students”

GROUP E:

- “Yes, very important to have police here at school; we see them walking around”
- “SBP have a neutral presence in the school”
- “Yes, it has made a difference having SBP here at school; don’t see them often; they are the silent security”
- “No major fights this year”
- “SBP provide internet safety presentations”
- “Social media causes major problems these days (students use Instagram; Tic Tac; Snap Chat); messages spread very quickly; kids put out negative stuff which causes problems/fights”
- “Police can close down a page – report posts”
- “Technology has a major impact today; IT devices are used to get kids out of parents’ hair”
- “Your peoples’ peer pressure – to be involved in activities with others be it on the internet, or doing stuff outside school even it is wrong”
- “Families need help, as they don’t understand what’s going on with their kids; we judge them unfairly; people break into places because they have no money”
- “No cyber safety presentations this year ... cancelled due to cyclone”
- “SBP speak at, and attend, assemblies”
- “Students don’t care about punishments; kids blame puberty and friends for their bad behaviour and wrong doing; need to take ownership for their actions and be responsible for, and own their actions”

Highlights:

- “SBP listen to both sides of the story”
- “Can strike up a conversation with SBP”
- “Would be a bad thing to take SBP out of schools; violence has decreased considerably since SBP came in; we feel safer with SBP here; even if we don’t see them around, the unconscious info in your head says they’re around”
- “Having SBP here is a good influence for everyone; a lot less negative behaviour is happening in class; less threatening of teachers/students in classrooms”

Suggestions/Improvements:

- “Would like SBP to ‘workshop’ issues ... not just present information”
- “Maybe if SBP didn’t wear uniform – not so intimidating”
- “Good idea to hold activities with SBP involved, as a means of students losing aggression, for example, using a boxing bag”
- “It would be useful to place a friendly sign at the SBP office so kids can drop in and have a chat”
- “Would like more lessons delivered by SBP; perhaps they could teach for a whole day; be in Pastoral Care sessions; come into school like a teacher, not a police officer”
- “Need to have a question box for SBP”
- “Important that SBP are visible/public/friendly”
- “Could adjust cyber bullying presentations for year groups, so students learn something new”
- “SBP could provide presentations on money, for example, need to save, earn, spend; impacts of stealing on people”
- “Information presented by SBP needs to be relevant; interactive; experiential; fun; colourful; interesting”
- “Need more information about consequences for actions”

The above comments are from a range of students, boys, girls and mixed groups in different age and year groups, from two diverse schools that are representative of ‘focus’ and mainstream students. It is suggestive of the feedback and student comments that the SBP Program is proving successful and making a difference in the short space of time it has been back in schools.

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